



The City of Morgantown

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Morgantown Police Chief Urges Residents to Use Ride Sharing Programs Correctly

MORGANTOWN – Transportation Network Companies, like Uber and Lyft, can be an economic and safety asset to a community.

Some studies report that these ride sharing companies can cut down on DUI arrests and drunk-driving fatalities. However, the Morgantown Police Department says it's important for the costumers to use them the right way.

“We encourage people to take whatever means, share a ride, designate drivers, ride share, get a taxi cab, public transportation, anything so as not to end up in a car wreck as a result of driving under the influence or being arrested for DUI,” said Chief Ed Preston. “At the same time, we want them to be careful and not be taken advantage of because of some of the unscrupulous people out there.”

Morgantown Police say it's important to use the cell phone apps that are provided for ride sharing programs. When a user hails an Uber or Lyft through the app, they are able to see an image of the driver, a license plate number, how that driver has been rated by other riders and a protected fare.

“Before you get into any car, before you authorize any payments or any transactions, you need to make sure that the person that you have contracted with is the one coming to pick you up,” explained Chief Preston. “All of the transactions have to be made through the app for the ride sharing program. There is no cash transaction involved. So, if people are asking for cash they are outside the scope of it and there is something hinky involved.”

Chief Preston says that the dangers people face if they do not use the app first range from financial troubles, too much worse. Preston reports that the app has a built in GPS, showing where exactly that driver is taking you, and it provides a paper trail.

“We have seen some of those kinds of crimes occurring and then the person doesn’t know who they are because they bypass the app. So, we don’t know who the person was that got the card and it’s a very complicated issue,” said Chief Preston. “Unfortunately, there are people out here that will take advantage of the situation and we encourage you- do not bypass the security features. If you’re going to use ride share, use the app and only the apps.”

Drivers for these services are required to pass a background check, be at least 21 years old, have car insurance, and comply with a zero tolerance drug and alcohol policy. The drivers are also not permitted to pick someone up unless they have been called through the app.

“Ride share operators are prohibited from using taxi cab stands because they are prohibited from soliciting fares from the street. All of their fares have to be prearranged through the app beforehand.” Chief Preston continued, “only taxicabs, which are regulated by the Public Service Commission and have licensing and other restrictions to them are the only ones that you are authorized to flag down.”

This means if someone in an unmarked car offers to take you home from the street, it’s best to find another ride. There are links to all of the ride sharing programs available for use in our city at Morgantownwv.gov.

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